

Retired archbishop receives university's highest honour

Former Archbishop of Brisbane Mark Coleridge has received an Honorary Doctorate from Australian Catholic University in recognition of a lifetime of service to the Church as pastor, leader and teacher.

Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge accepted a Doctor of the University (*Honoris Causa*) during an ACU Brisbane Graduation Ceremony on 5 May 2026.

The 77-year-old, who retired as leader of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane in 2025, said he was surprised and pleased to accept the honorary award from ACU.

“I don’t look for any awards or honours beyond those that have come my way already - I don’t need to add to my postnominals - but I have a quiet sense of satisfaction with this one,” Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge said.

Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge served as president of the ACU Corporation for many years, contributing to the university’s governance and Catholic mission.

“What distinguishes ACU is the possibility of bringing those understandings into fresh dialogue with the wider culture, in the belief that the marriage of faith and reason which grounds those understandings is important not just for Catholics for the wider culture as well,” the Archbishop Emeritus said.

His advice to students embarking on their graduation was to not be afraid to take the plunge.

“If you wait for some absolute certainty, you’ll find yourself paralysed,” he said.

“Certainly don’t be afraid of saying yes to Jesus Christ – the real Jesus who’s here and now or nowhere and never.

“You lose nothing saying yes to him; in fact, you gain everything. That has been the truth of my life.”

Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge was leader of the Brisbane archdiocese for 13 years between 2012 and 2025. Prior to his appointment in Brisbane, he led the Archdiocese of Canberra for six years.

Born and raised in Melbourne, Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge was ordained a priest on 18 May 1974, serving local parishes before being posted to Rome where he became the first Melbourne priest to receive a Doctorate in Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

He served in the Vatican as an official of the Secretariat of State, before Pope John Paul II appointed him auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne in 2002.

As past president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge guided the Church through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, speaking out against the gross failure of Church leaders to protect children and the vulnerable.

Now enjoying retirement at a “bayside bungalow”, the long-serving pastor said he was experiencing “the slow awakening to the deeper nature of priestly and episcopal ministry”.

“I’ve come to see things which I wish I’d seen more clearly earlier in life, but that isn’t the way God works – things like the absolute importance of listening, the slow and painful learning of humility, prayer not just as part of my life but as my whole life which is to be a constant listening to the God who never ceases to communicate, learning to speak out of that listening,” Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge said.

A self-confessed “teacher at heart” the Emeritus Archbishop continues to serve the flock leading retreats to unpack Scripture.

“As I move into retirement, that text I’ve found myself turning to is Genesis 1:1 – 4:16, the story of the creation and fall which grounds the whole Bible. As I come to the end of my time in office, I turn back to the beginning,” he said.

After a lengthy service to the Church, the retired prelate is now writing his autobiography, asking the question: Where is home?

“I’ve lived in twenty-eight different places through the years, and each has and has not been home,” Archbishop Emeritus Coleridge said.

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“I lived important years of my life in Rome, and part of me will always stay there. But Australia is home, and Brisbane is where I chose to retire. Brisbane is home for me now after thirteen years here.

“But I find myself pondering St Paul’s words: ‘our homeland is in heaven’.”

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